



American Society of Addiction Medicine  
Connecticut Chapter  
P.O. Box 88, Hartford, CT 06141

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**Testimony in Support of Revised Raised H. B. 7155  
An Act Concerning a Professional Assistance Program  
for Health Care Professionals**

Senator Handley, Representative Sayers and members of the Committee on Public Health:

My name is Dr. Ken Freedman, President of the Connecticut Chapter of the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM). For 12 years, I have practiced as an internist and addiction medicine specialist. I currently serve as the Medical Director of Ambulatory Care Services at Connecticut Valley Hospital, and as a member of the Committee on Physician Health of the Hartford County Medical Association.

My colleagues in the CT Chapter of A.S.A.M. and I have been actively involved in the evaluation, treatment, rehabilitation, and monitoring of impaired health care professionals, including physicians. Our organization enthusiastically supports the revised language in Raised H. B. No. 7155.

Over the course of their careers, an estimated 9,000 Connecticut health care professionals will suffer from impairment due to substance abuse, depression and other psychiatric disorders, and/or physical illness. Early intervention and treatment for these impaired health care professionals, who have dedicated themselves to the service of our community, increases the likelihood of successful rehabilitation before public safety is jeopardized. This intervention will more than likely occur within the framework of the confidential and responsible oversight program created by revised Raised H. B. 7155. Professionals will have the opportunity to receive the benefits of the knowledge, support, and skill of their mental health/addiction specialist colleagues within a comprehensive

interdisciplinary approach to their potential impairment. This sharing of resources will lead to well-organized and cost-effective care.

A prerequisite of a professional's confidential participation will be their consistent and ongoing cooperation with the HCPAP.

Accountability is provided for in Section 2 (a-f), by the requirement that the Health Care Professional Assistance Program (HCPAP) have regular meetings with the Department of Public Health (DPH). The DPH would be informed of the number and nature of health care professionals receiving these services, the nature of their treatment, and the scope of supervision under which they are operating.

The current system for impaired physicians does not sufficiently promote appropriate rehabilitation. Many impaired physicians do not get referred to the DPH; many others seek out-of-state treatment. Both of these results lead to insufficient monitoring of these impaired professionals.

Confidentiality is an essential element of a successful program. Only with this guarantee will health care professionals seek the support, treatment, and rehabilitation we can provide. Without the guarantee of privacy, health care professionals will shy away from seeking the help they so desperately need. Through ongoing monitoring, we will be able to ensure that these professionals are practicing with the necessary skill and safety to deliver the high quality of care that our families, friends, and the public deserve.

Thank you for your consideration and your support of the revised language in Raised H. B. 7155.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "K. J. Freedman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Ken Freedman, M.D., MBA, FASAM – President, CT Chapter of A.S.A.M.